

people in large numbers may endanger this species in this area. More study is required to establish these facts and other details.

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13. SIGHTINGS OF THE SPANISH SPARROW *PASSER HISPANIOLENSIS* (TEMMINCK) AT KOTA IN SOUTH EAST RAJASTHAN

I have been observing mixed flocks of House sparrow *Passer domesticus* and Spanish sparrow *P. hispaniolensis* around Kota for the last 3 years (1992, 93, 94). These flocks are particularly abundant in the fields and grasslands, feeding on grass seeds. 3-4 flocks of about 500 birds each were seen moving around Abhedra on 7th November, 21st December, 1994 and 4th January, 1995. The males are distinguishable by their chestnut head and grey markings on the flanks. The males with black markings on throat and flanks with white supercilium have been observed in late January and early February. The females are rather difficult to distinguish, but some show up with faint markings on the flanks.

Ali and Ripley (1987) have described the range of Spanish sparrow in India, whereby Bharatpur (27° 10' N, 77° 32' E) and Sambhar lake near Jaipur form the southernmost points of its distribution. Mohapatra and Rao (1990) have sighted and ringed Spanish sparrow at Karera (25° 30' N, 78° 12' E), Madhya Pradesh. Rahmani (1991) has also included this bird in the checklist of Karera. Kota (25° 10' N, 75° 52' E) is situated roughly 270 mm. south west of Karera. Thus these repeated sightings can be treated as a southward range extension of the Spanish sparrow.

March 6, 1995

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14. A SIGHT RECORD OF THE BESRA SPARROW-HAWK (*ACCIPITER VIRGATUS*) IN RISHI VALLEY, ANDHRA PRADESH

On 28th July, 1991 I located a shikra-sized raptor among the trees on the wooded hillside in the Asthachal area of the Rishi Valley School, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh. The bird was seen close to the grain

thrashing area, which usually attracts several small passerine birds. It was quite aggressive and bold and was seen chasing crows that tried to mob it.

The bird afforded fairly good views and I was

able to see all the field marks — the greyish brown upperparts, the whitish patch on the nape, at least three dark tail bands, the dark throat-stripe flanked by two fainter moustachial streaks and the pale underparts with bold vertical streaks. I could identify the bird as an immature Besra sparrow-hawk.

This sighting may be of interest as, according to the HANDBOOK (Vol. 1), this species has been sparingly recorded in the Eastern Ghats and its status there is uncertain. Further, the habitat in which the bird was seen was dry deciduous (altered a little by artificial tree planting) and not the "evergreen or moist deciduous type", the known habitat in which the bird occurs.

15. SIGHTING OF WATER RAIL *RALLUS AQUATICUS* NEAR MUMBAI

A Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* was spotted among the mangroves during low tide on 25th December, 1994 at Thane Creek. The bird was actively feeding in the marsh. The Water Rail has not been reported earlier from Mumbai and Maharashtra (Ali and Ripley 1983). The bird is reported to be resident and breeding in Kashmir and Ladakh: straggling south in winter as far at least as Madhya Pradesh (Ali and Ripley 1983). I have not come across any reference to

the occurrence of this bird in Mumbai and Maharashtra. Probably this is the southern most record of this bird in the country.

The bird was photographed and the identification was confirmed by comparing it with the specimen at BNHS.

July 4, 1995

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16. ORANGEBILLED JUNGLE MYNAH AND HODGSON'S BUSH CHAT IN KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK

The Orangebilled Jungle Mynah (*Acridotheres grandis*) was seen on two separate occasions in April 1995 in Benguri Range of Kaziranga National Park (26° 30' and 26° 45' N and 93° 5' and 93° 40' E) in Assam. In all 11 individuals of the species were seen on the two occasions in groups of five and six respectively. The species has been noted on other occasions also by the first author. This is a new species for the Kaziranga bird checklist and has gone unnoticed probably because of its similarity with the Jungle Mynah (*Acridotheres fuscus*). It is easily distinguishable by its completely orange bill as compared to the yellow-orange bill of the latter. In

case of the Jungle Mynah, the base of the lower mandible tends to be bluish-black (Ali and Ripley, 1983). The Orangebilled Jungle Mynah also has a distinctively larger bunch of unruly hairs on its forehead than the Jungle Mynah. Earlier, this species was recorded from Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Mizo hills and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Ali and Ripley, 1983). After this, birdwatchers have considerably enlarged its range by observations in Panidihing (Sibsagar district), (Barooah, 1994), Sibsagar town, Dambruchara (North Cachar district), Laokhawa and Burrha-Sapori (Naogaon district) and Guwahati town (Choudhury 1991). The species has also been

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